



Ethical Decision Making: Using Insight and Ethics to Make Tough Choices

A. Define the Dilemma– Remember, a dilemma is...

- **Dilemma** - a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives.

Identify then Discuss: What is a dilemma you are facing right now in life?

(Simply put: What is challenging situation in which you aren't sure what to do?)

B. Try to use insight to re-examine your dilemma objectively...

- **Objective** - not influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts.

This can be very challenging so first consider the following example:

1. Dilemma – “I can’t stand this marriage any longer and I want out!”
2. Same Dilemma, restated with deeper insight and in a way that is more objective:
“My spouse and I are no longer communicating appropriately with each other as we tend to switch between yelling and silent treatments, and I often find myself fantasizing about separation as a quick and easy escape”

Identify then Discuss: Re-examine and then restate your own dilemma with deeper insight:



C. Brainstorm your choices – In true brainstorming fashion*, write a list of your possible choices for your dilemma.

*Sometimes it is good to include some of the choices that seem silly or based in fantasy because, when brainstorming, those ideas can still be a stepping stones to better ones. It can be good to “think outside the box” at times.

Some examples:

- “I’ll secretly pack my bags in the trunk of my car and then say I am going out to the convenience store then I’ll keep on driving and never ever come back”
- “I’ll hire a pit bull of a divorce lawyer and seek my revenge in court”
- “I’ll just go back to drinking every day and make life miserable so my spouse just leaves me”
- “I’ll wait until we are calm and I will tell the truth about how unhappy I am lately with all of our fighting and hope that maybe we can start trying to talk constructively”

Identify then Discuss: What are some options for dealing with your dilemma?

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D. Think and then use your sense of *ethics*.

Some questions to consider in your head when thinking about your choices using your sense of ethics:

- How would this choice affect others that may be indirectly involved? (Children, for example)
- What would I tell someone else in my situation to do?
- What would people who I know and respect want me to do? (Parents, close freinds, for example)
- How do my personal beliefs about what is right and wrong come into play? (For example, The “Golden Rule” – Do I believe in treating others how I would want to be treated?)

Break it Down: Go through your list from Part C above using ethics as your guide to cross off and eliminate choices that are just not the right thing to do for you



E. Finally, examine what is left and now be realistic, practical and ready to take some smaller steps. What is left in your list should be at least one choice that is ethical, but still may not be easy or ideal. Now think about what is realistic and practical while identifying smaller steps that you may be willing to start taking toward resolving your dilemma.

For example:

<u>Choice</u>	<u>Realistically, things I would be willing to do</u>
“I’ll wait until we are calm and I will tell my spouse the truth about how unhappy I am lately with all of our fighting and hope that maybe we can start trying to talk constructively”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ I will see if my spouse is willing to agree to start with at least trying not to argue in front of the kids➤ I will suggest we start going out on a weekly “date night” so we can spend more quality time together➤ I will work on my own anger issues in counseling to help avoid future fights➤ I would be willing to consider marriage counseling if my spouse is open to it

Identify then Discuss: Use the table below to select your final choice and then come up with some smaller realistic steps you would be willing to take to start resolving your dilemma

<u>Choice</u>	<u>Realistically, things I would be willing to do</u>
	➤
	➤
	➤
	➤
	➤

Conclusion: Is there a guarantee the above plan will work? Of course not, as there are no guarantees in life. Still, if done correctly, the above plan is insightful yet realistic and practical and it is in line with your personal sense of ethics. It is a great place to start.

If doing this in group: Get feedback. What does your group think about your final plan?